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ABSTRACT

This study examined preservice teachers' case writing to identify problems they considered important when analyzing a written case, how they proposed to resolve these problems, perspectives that guided their problem solving, and whether their problem solving strategies and perspectives changed over the course of a semester. The study occurred in an undergraduate course, "Addressing Literacy Difficulties and Practicum." Student teachers analyzed cases from different perspectives, read multiple texts on factors contributing to literacy development and literacy difficulties among diverse students, and analyzed different approaches to assessment and instruction. They also planned and implemented an individualized literacy program for a child experiencing literacy difficulties, and they wrote cases about their own teaching and the practicum, sharing them with peers during small-group discussions. At the beginning and end of the course, they wrote analyses of one written case. Data analysis indicated that student teachers had dramatic shifts in their perspectives on their role in providing primary literacy instruction in the classroom. They moved toward forms of instruction that would enhance students' capabilities and literacy learning strengths. They also moved toward actively seeking collaborative learning within the classroom and collaboration with parents and the community. (Contains 32 references.) (SM)

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Educating Future Teachers by Inviting Critical Inquiry

by

Victoria J. Risko, Jane C. Osterman, & Deborah Schussler

Paper presented at annual meeting of the
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A major goal of our literacy methods course is to help future teachers come to understand how children's diverse backgrounds, linguistic differences, and learning capabilities impact their literacy development. We use written and multimedia cases to invite generative and problem-based learning during the analysis of instructional dilemmas that are embedded within the cases. Our future teachers are encouraged to examine multiple sources of information (e.g., theories of teaching and learning; scientific pedagogical concepts; written, video, and audio representations of "authentic" literacy events) and generate "reasoned" interpretations of instructional decisions and their appropriateness for children with widely different experiential, linguistic, and instructional backgrounds. Such inquiry is grounded in our prospective teachers' developing understanding of theoretical and practical knowledge, and the ability to "care" about, and take ownership for, the impact of these decisions on children's literacy development (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2000).

We attempt to develop a community that acknowledges and encourages diverse beliefs and interpretations of case content. When students are invited to generate issues and problems associated with case content, learning is shared and facilitated by members of the classroom community. This direction for teaching within such environments is influenced greatly by sociocultural research that is grounded in demonstrations of how teachers and students collaborate and mediate each others' learning (Gavelek, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978), and a belief that knowledge is best constructed through multiple opportunities for interactions among the instructor and students (Cazden, 1988, 2000; Hynds, 1994; Eeds & Wells, 1989).

Deep analysis required for case-based learning is especially needed if we are going to help future teachers move beyond the narrow frameworks they bring to their teacher preparation programs. We know that it is very difficult to change firmly-held beliefs about teaching (Block & Hazelip, 1995; Johnston, 1994; Loflin Smith, 1993; Richardson, 1996; Stofflett and Stoddart, 1992). Adopting new perspectives and understanding the impact of diverse learning practices and linguistic backgrounds on literacy development (Au, 1998) may be especially difficult for prospective teachers whose own learning practices and former experiences in schools may be quite different from those of the children they will teach. Yet we agree with Nieto (2000) and others who argue that what prospective teachers learn in their preparation programs, including the development of respect for diverse and conflicting viewpoints has the power to transform their personal identities and the perspectives they adopt to guide their instructional decisions.

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We use written and multimedia cases to create dynamic learning communities within our preservice methodology course, and as an alternative to a lecture-based pedagogy. These cases represent multiple complex events associated with implementing reading and writing instruction in elementary classrooms and provide sufficient content for analyzing instructional events from different perspectives (e.g., the teacher, students, curriculum, school, and parents/community). These cases are not prescriptive; instead they portray actual events, instructional decisions, and the consequences of these decisions. Our cases serve dual purposes as an instructional method for enhancing students' generative and collaborative learning and as a demonstration of strategies that they could implement when they develop their own classrooms in which inquiry and problem solving are valued (e.g., Sarason, 1996).

Our attempts to reform our literacy methodology courses are guided by several perspectives. First, there is the sociocultural perspective guiding our work, as described above. Accordingly, we believe it is important to change the cultural landscape of our college classes. We want to create a "climate of permission," an environment in our classes where both the instructor and preservice teachers expect to be highly involved in the sharing and analysis of ideas. Within such a climate, learning is enhanced by the interaction of the community members. Similar to Brown and Campione's (1994, 1996) "community of learners " concept, the goals for the course instructor are to facilitate and guide case discussions by signaling the importance of ideas being discussed, and foster discovery of alternative viewpoints and competing theories of teaching and learning.

Second, we believe that engaging students in shared problem-solving activities is a powerful way to develop students' critical thinking and understanding of diverse pathways for achieving problem resolutions (Bransford, Vye, Kinzer, & Risko, 1990; CTG, 1996). Asking students to consider data embedded in cases (e.g., analyzing children's oral reading and oral language) and identify problem characteristics (e.g., noticing how mandated curriculum is not responsive to children's cultural experiences) instead of responding to problems that the instructor defines for them can help future teachers to investigate contributing factors and weigh alternative solution paths. This problematizing of the cases can help future teachers personalize the content and come to their own understanding of the importance of newly-acquired information and the applications of this information.

Third, case methodology also influences our approach to instruction. During the last decade, teacher education scholars (Carter & Anders, 1996; Kleinfeld, 1995; Lampert & Ball, 1998; J. Shulman, 1992; L. Shulman, 1995) have argued that teaching with cases that represent problems associated with teaching and learning can engage future teachers in a process of "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, 1987, p. 10). Our goal for these cases is to develop future teachers' critical thinking strategies and their ability to respond to multiple aspects of problems that occur in classrooms.

Overall, we draw on these perspectives to guide our attempts to build learning environments that support depth of thinking about complex issues and "community" (Darling-Hammond, 1996). We believe these environments must be created deliberately to help future teachers think deeply about issues they are exploring, examine information from many perspectives, and learn how and when to use newly-learned information for

responding to problems. Such environments build community by helping students value what others offer within shared-learning contexts. Our goal is to provide the conditions that allow students to develop critical thinking about complex issues.

This goal to develop critical thinking about complex issues related to student diversity and literacy instruction was the focus of this investigation. We examined our prospective teachers' case writing to identify the problems they viewed as important when they analyzed a written case, how they proposed to resolve these problems and the perspectives that guided their problem solving, and if these problem-solving strategies and perspectives changed over the course of a semester.

Methodology and Data Collection

This investigation was conducted in an undergraduate course entitled *Addressing Literacy Difficulties and Practicum.* Enrollment in the course was 16 future teachers; all had completed a set of reading and language arts courses and an accompanying practicum where they taught reading and writing to groups of students in an elementary classroom. All students in the course were seeking initial certification and concurrently completed the course on campus while teaching in an elementary or middle school. During class sessions on campus, these future teachers analyzed five cases (one written case and four multimedia cases) from different perspectives, read multiple readings on factors contributing to literacy development and literacy difficulties, and analyzed different approaches to assessment and instruction.

More specifically, the cases used in our college course invite prospective teachers thinking about the following issues:

Case 1, Carlos – second language learners and literacy development, building collaborative and supportive learning communities in the classroom, providing literacy instruction that is responsive to students' background knowledge and experiences, encouraging multiple language representations in reading, writing, and oral expression, use of authentic texts and students' choice;

Case 2, Crystal – early literacy emergence, developing text reading and writing with embedded skills and strategy instruction, kidwatching as a form of assessment, building instruction on student's linguistic and experiential background.

Case 3, Tericka – analyzing student's representation of text using graphic, phonic, language, and meaning cues during oral reading (miscue analysis) and comprehension strategies used for retelling texts that are read.

Case 4, Ryan and Mickey – strategies for assessing how students make sense of text and identify unknown words and text ideas, multiple uses of children's literature to support sense making.

Case 5, Ms. Kingrey's class – guided reading instruction that invites connections between students' personal knowledge and text ideas, building collaborative and peer supported learning environments, and teachers collaborating to support students' literacy development.

For the teaching practicum, the prospective teachers planned and implemented an individualized literacy program for a child who was described by the school as experiencing literacy difficulties. Finally, each student wrote cases about their own

teaching in the practicum and shared these with their peers during small-group discussions.

At the beginning and end of the course, these prospective teachers were asked to write their analysis of the written case, titled "Carlos" (Silverman and Welty, 1997), This case focuses on Jim, a sixth grade teacher in an urban school setting who is worried about Carlos' limited success in Jim's literacy instructional program. Carlos' primary language is Spanish, a language he uses at home and with his friends in the neighborhood. In school, Carlos is expected to read, write, and express his ideas orally in English. Jim believes that Carlos receives no academic support at home and worries about Carlos' "mispronunciation" of English words and "poor comprehension" of English basal texts.

On the second day of the class, the prospective teachers are asked to read the Carlos case and answer two open-ended questions "What form of instruction do you recommend?" and "Identify issues, dilemmas, and problems embedded in the case". On the last day of the class on campus, they are asked to reread the Carlos case and make recommendations for Carlos' instruction and discuss issues and dilemmas embedded in the case. Their initial and final case writings were analyzed for this paper.

Data Analysis

The prospective teachers' writings on the Carlos case were treated as transcripts and read and reread several times by the three researchers. The "gist" of each semantic unit was recorded. Each semantic unit represented a complete thought and a new semantic unit began when the topic of the unit changed. Data analysis was conducted within the tradition of qualitative research in which an interpretative stance guides the data analysis (i.e., Firestone, 1987; Jacob, 1987). Analysis of the case data was based on the constant comparative method (Bodgan & Biklen, 1982; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the use of open and axial coding procedures described by Strauss & Corbin (1994). Data were analyzed independently by the three authors. Patterns, categories, and themes were derived from the data sets (first and second case writing) and sorted and compared to provide a means for cross-data analysis and a comprehensive interpretation of students' responses. Triangulation was used to establish credibility of the data analysis (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Themes and patterns were re-examined for representation of categories.

First, we applied an analysis of the semantic units to generate broad descriptions of how the prospective teachers chose to organize and develop their case writings. We derived tentative codes to represent the multiple ideas embedded in the case writings. Second, we reread the transcripts and derived more precise and descriptive codes, generating and verifying our hunches about patterns. Throughout this analysis and consistent with our analytic inductive paradigm, we cross-referenced our categories and descriptions of salient characteristics of the semantic units. Third, we reread the transcripts and using axial coding we organized our codes into broader conceptual units to represent the embedded networks of semantic relationships. These relational properties form the prevailing paradigm(s) situated within the students' case writings. These paradigms form the basis of a grounded theory of prospective teachers' learning within the study of diverse learners' literacy difficulties—a study that is primed with

multiple readings and case-based teaching that focus explicitly on sociocultural and constructivist notions of literacy development.

Across the two data sets, we compared and contrasted our future teachers' analysis and interpretation of case issues and dilemmas and their recommendations for solving case problems.

Results

We analyzed our data by first describing characteristics of our prospective teachers' case writing and, second by deriving theory that is useful for interpreting the changes we noted in analysis of the Carlos case.

Characteristics of case writings

The following is a brief summary of the patterns that we identified from the analysis of 32 protocols (i.e., initial and final writings on the Carlos case). First, we searched for semantic relationships embedded within the two case writings. This analysis helped us identify eight broad themes represented within discussions of case issues and/or instructional recommendations. These themes were self-esteem and identity (viewed as important to consider), (various forms of) literacy instruction, home-school connections, language (noting different home-school languages), materials (used for instruction), (suggestions for) personalized or individualized instruction, classroom management and organization, and assessment.

We noted, however, that there was a remarkable difference in attention to these themes between the first and second case writings. For the first writing, two themes were primary to the case discussions—the themes of literacy instruction (often in the form of inappropriate instruction for this second language learner) and classroom management and organization (in the form of recommending a teacher assistant or another teacher to relieve the classroom teacher of his responsibility for individualizing his literacy instruction). A secondary theme (present in about half of the protocols) in the initial case writings involved a mix of recommendations for materials to either teach specific skills (usually lower order skills), use books with "simple language" (for this second language learner), and/or materials that Carlos might enjoy or that might be relevant to his background experiences. This latter recommendation was appropriate for Carlos but appeared in less than 1/3rd of the protocols. On average, the prospective teachers discussed three of the eight themes (and often these discussions represented misconceptions about literacy instruction for second language learners.). Furthermore, none of the future teachers addressed issues related to the need for individualizing (or personalizing) instruction or providing additional assessments that could inform instruction for Carlos.

Conversely, the second set of protocols contained a richer and denser set of statements and every prospective teacher discussed at least five of the eight themes. We noticed consistent attention to instruction that was responsive to Carlos' capabilities (e.g., encouraging writing in his home language, reading Spanish and English texts) and recommendations for (a) using authentic learning experiences and materials, (b) facilitating two-way communication with Carlos' family and the community, and (c) providing for careful assessments to tailor instruction for Carlos' development.

During open coding, we reread each protocol to identify more precisely semantic units appearing during the initial and final case writings. Following our initial hypotheses that produced our broad, descriptive themes, we now analyzed carefully each semantic unit and derived definitive codes (e.g., connections between school and home, teach phonics) which were assigned to each semantic unit. This procedure produced codes for 142 semantic units in the initial protocols and 217 semantic units in the final protocols.

Using axial coding, we reduced this large set of codes to five larger conceptual groupings that represented the prospective teachers' statements on each set of protocols.

Insert Table 1 about here

As reported in Table 1, our future teachers' analytical responses fell primarily in two categories, referred to as "directing blame on others" and "instructional mismatch", with 39% and 23% of the responses assigned to these categories, respectively. For this initial case writing, our future teachers' lenses focused primarily on the "harsh" conditions of the school (lack of funding for extra teachers) and the neighborhood community, including what they perceived as a lack of parental support (e.g., lack of involvement, no books at home). When combining their recommendations in this category with those presented in the third category, seeking help from others (15% of the comments), these prospective teachers positioned the teacher as not being responsible for the problem or the solution to Carlos' literacy difficulties. 54% of all responses fell within these two categories.

Second, these future teachers seemed at a loss to know how to initiate literacy instruction that would support Carlos; thus, they recommended strategies that were inappropriate for him. They misunderstood Carlos' capabilities and literacy strengths and instead focused on teaching skills (e.g., phonics, correct word pronunciation, correct spelling) that did not account for the skills and language abilities he possessed already.

Third, some responses did make sense for Carlos; those responses were categorized as having an "instructional match" and "building on child's knowledge and language", with 13% and 11% of the responses accounted for respectively in these two categories. In total, these two categories of responses accounted for about one-fourth of the total analytical statements and recommendations. We noted, though, that these statements in these two categories were often less precise and more general than those represented in the above categories. This suggested to us that the future teachers were less clear in their thinking about how they would actually implement recommendations such as, "journal writing", "personalize instruction", or "enhance self esteem". Typically, these recommendations were provided with little elaboration or supporting examples.

Conversely, for the final case writing analytical statements and recommendations fell primarily within four categories, with 78% of the responses coded as either "building instruction on child's knowledge and language" or having an "instructional match", with 48% and 30%, respectively, coded for each category. Often students elaborated on their recommendations as they provided a "vision" of what may be expected for Carlos' classroom and literacy instruction. We noted, too, that the three categories coded for the initial case writings, "directing blame on others", "instructional mismatch", and "seeking

help from others", dropped out of our analysis. Statements representative of these three categories were not present in the last case writings. Instead, these teachers talked about their responsibilities as classroom teachers to take on instructional activities such as "relate knowledge and experience to texts that Carlos read", "take time to conference with Carlos and his family" (perhaps with an interpreter present) to learn more about Carlos' experiences and interests and seek advice from his parents. These teachers talked carefully about ways to build collaborative and shared learning in their classrooms and the importance of accepting "hybrids" of language as indicators of thinking and use of two languages.

Overall, when we compare the first and second case writings we note dramatic shifts in the prospective teachers' perspectives on their role in providing primary literacy instruction in the classroom, moving toward forms of instruction that enhance Carlos' capabilities and literacy learning strengths, and actively seeking collaborative learning within the classroom and with Carlos' parents and community.

Building Explanations of Prospective Teachers' Performance On Case Writings over Time

We refer to Bernstein's (1973) notions of "classification" and "framing" to help us build grounded theory of prospective teachers' adopting new perspectives and shifting from misconceptions about literacy instruction to those that are more consistent with aspects of culturally relevant teaching that have been suggested by Au and Carroll (1997), Moll (1996), and Ladson-Billings (1995). In his discussion of education reform that is directed toward providing equitable instruction for children regardless of diverse out-of-school experiences and a weakening between SES and educational achievement, Bernstein argues that narrow viewpoints (and misconceptions about children's abilities) associated with *classifying* students (e.g., all need a common curriculum to achieve, knowledge is fixed and must be achieved to gain status) and *framing* (or controlling by teacher direction and didactic methods) class interactions must be replaced with knowledge about students as active learners who bring rich resources to the classroom. (Insert Figure 1 about here.)

If we place our prospective teachers' analytical statements on the quadrants represented in Figure 1, we note quickly that the majority of statements coded for the first case writing would be assigned to the top right quadrant. Initially, Carlos was "classified" as disabled, a student who had many disadvantages and who needed external and authoritative help to overcome his many "problems". Comments concerning the need for an ESL teacher or special instruction or particular skills suggests an effort to teach Carlos content that is respected by the dominant cultures of schools (with little recognition of Carlos' own literacy practices and knowledge). Furthermore, they suggest a didactic approach to instruction—"teach him what he needs to know so that he will succeed."

Our analysis of our prospective teachers' second case writing, however, shows considerable movement toward the lower left quadrant of Figure 1. In those writings, we find a consistent recommendation for teachers to think of Carlos' as an individual whose own language and literacy practices can be the foundation for literacy instruction. *Classification* moves from treating Carlos as an outsider and disabled by his life

circumstances to one that validates his home language and literacy knowledge and treats him as an active and able learner. The instructional goal expressed consistently in the second writings is to integrate Carlos' out-of-school knowledge with classroom activities, and thus, enabling his chance to succeed. Likewise, the recommendations to form collaborative learning activities in the classroom, to invite parental participation, and to encourage choice of readings and activities, connotes a sharp movement in *framing* the classroom happenings. These suggestions allow for flexibility in lesson development, timing, and pacing; methods for students to support each others learning; and the use of multiple resources (e.g., multiple texts, learning from each other) to facilitate literacy learning. Consistent with Erickson's (1996) discussion of more "elastic" frames for implementing instruction, our prospective teachers were envisioning multiple ways to implement cooperative learning and the value of reciprocal learning within dynamic classroom environments.

Conclusions and Discussion

We are beginning to derive conclusions that once written down may help us confirm our hunches or seek additional ways to think about our data analysis. Thus, we offer these interpretations and preliminary conclusions to invite feedback and to help us advance our thinking. First, we note substantial changes in knowledge acquisition and depth of reasoning across the semester, as demonstrated in the case writings of our prospective teachers. These changes involved a developing recognition of multiple individual and contextual factors contributing to literacy development and reasons for instructional actions that are influenced by broad sociocultural factors. Second, we notice that shifts from early unidimensional and narrow conceptions of literacy instruction and learning were characterized by adopting perspectives that allowed for a wider range of theoretical and practice issues to influence thinking. For example, prospective teachers' earlier conviction that children with diverse linguistic backgrounds must "adjust" to all-English classrooms shifted to precise recommendations for adapting curriculum so that it is responsive to individual differences and capabilities. Moving from firm convictions that these children need to be "placed elsewhere to receive the help of specialists" they generated practices that engage children with widely diverse backgrounds in meaning-oriented learning communities in the classroom. Third, we note that "problem identification" shifted across time with increased ability to generate multiple reasons for problematic situations and alternate resolution paths. The study of problems from different perspectives enabled these future teachers to reconsider explicitly former preconceived notions and reconcile beliefs and newly-learned information. Overall, this investigation provides a way to specify more precisely how and what prospective teachers are learning (and not learning) within a problem-solving inquiry-oriented environment and characteristics of this learning environment that may contribute to their learning.

Educational Significance

Over a decade ago, Lee Shulman (1986) suggested that research should move beyond an identification of cognitive processes of teachers to that of identifying the

knowledge these teachers draw on to comprehend, analyze, and resolve classroom problems. More recently, researchers, such as Gallego and Cole and their colleagues (2002) and Munby, Russell, and Martin (2002) expand on Shulman's recommendation to discuss complex issues related to understanding the development of teachers' knowledge within teacher education programs. Our instruction is designed to foster inquiry-oriented learning environments where the future teacher is the producer of knowledge, rather than a passive recipient; such inquiry-oriented instruction that invites critique and the social sharing of knowledge is widely recommended (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fecho, 2000). Examining our prospective teachers' involvement in sustained problem solving within one such environment provides one "window" into how future teachers may acquire new knowledge, adopt alternate perspectives, and test "new" theories and understandings to guide instruction. Yet we acknowledge that multiple opportunities to "watch" and interpret prospective teachers' knowledge development are necessary because we know that learning and knowledge are not static entities, but instead ever changing and acted upon for different reasons and outcomes. What we provide with this study is one example of knowledge production within a community that is "heavily seeded" and primed for building understandings of social justice and literacy development based on capabilities of diverse learners.

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Table 1: Conceptual Networks Embedded in Case Analyses

Initial Case

Category	N	%
1. Directing blame on others	55	39%
Inadequate Funding	(12)	
No home resources	(11)	
Poor neighborhood	(9)	
Lack of parental involvement	(9)	
Harsh environment	(5)	
No books at home	(5)	
Low SES	(2)	
Past teachers	(1)	
"A lot against him"	(1)	
2. Instructional Mismatch	33	23%
Phonics	(9)	
Correct pronunciation	(7)	
Spell correctly	(6)	
Word learning	(5)	
Oral reading practice	(3)	
Simple language books	(1)	
Comprehension problems	(1)	
Use dictionary	(1)	
3. Seeking help from others	21	15%
Need more teachers to help	(8)	
Send books home for family to read to him	(6)	

Final Case

Category	N	%
1. Building instruction on child's knowledge and language	105	48%
Relate knowledge and experience to texts	(16)	
Recognize different home culture for match to instruction	(15)	
Build on student's strengths	(14)	
Build connections between English and Spanish	(11)	
Take time to get to know Carlos (experience and interests)	(9)	
Conference with family, seek advice	(9)	
Build on self esteem and interests	(8)	
Assess with retelling to learn Carlos' understandings	(7)	
Build on his success in other subjects	(6)	
Assess his language cues and strategies	(5)	
Allow and expect different pronunciations	(2)	
Provide Spanish texts, if useful	(2)	
Can't assume deficiencies	(1)	
2. Instructional Match	66	30%
Hold high expectations and honor/praise his attempts	(14)	
Have Carlos write about his experiences	(11)	
Build vocabulary and concepts from texts	(8)	

Need teachers/aide for individual help	(3)	
Need ESL teacher	(2)	
Need principal to redesign time and curriculum	(2)	
4. Instructional Match	18	13%
Journal writing	(6)	
Use meaningful text	(5)	
Provide buddy, inclass help	(4)	
Provide choice for reading	(2)	
Ask for predictions (on what child knows)	(1)	
5. Building instruction on child's knowledge and language	15	11%
Personalize instruction	(8)	
Recognize he's smart	(2)	
Use language experience activity	(1)	
Enhance self esteem	(1)	
Use what he knows	(1)	
Provide dual language classes	(1)	
Use Spanish instruction	(1)	
Total	142 semantic units	

Use Spanish and English texts	(6)	
Provide lots of reading opportunities	(5)	
Encourage writing in primary language	(5)	
Use multicultural texts	(3)	
Encourage hybrid language use	(1)	
Provide choices of texts and activities	(1)	
3. Two-way home-school connections	23	11%
Conference with family to learn about Carlos' activities and experiences	(9)	
Have Carlos read at home books he's practiced at school	(8)	
Invite families in for conferences, activities	(4)	
Have Carlos share at home new words and vocabulary he's learned	(2)	
4. Develop classroom community	23	11%
Develop peer support, buddies, and group collaborations	(12)	
Build classroom community (trust, student involvement)	(11)	
Total	217 semantic units	

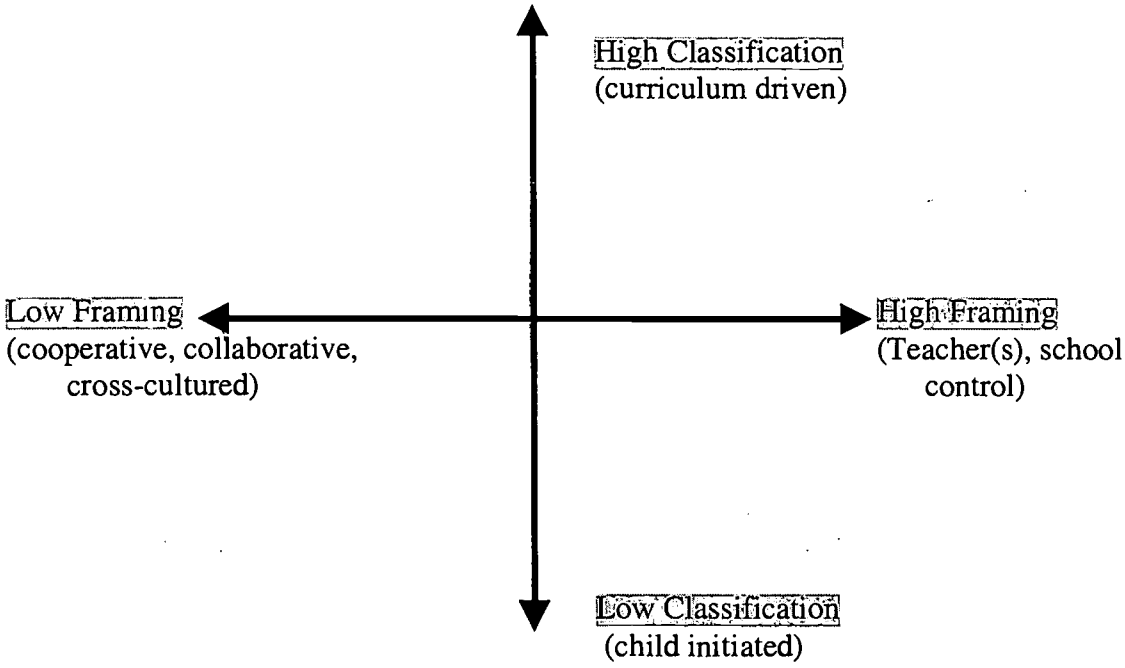

Figure 1: Applying framing and classification concepts (Bernstein, 1973)

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